

Food Bytes January 2016

Adopted from Chefs Connection - Multco Food Safety Blog – Elizabeth Sandberg, M.S and REHS - Oregon

Cross-Contamination

We are all familiar with the term cross-contamination. In the commercial kitchen environment, it occurs when a virus or bacteria is transferred from hands to food, equipment to food, and food to food. Let's take a closer look.

Hands to Food

Scenario: An employee has a sick child at home and comes to work without letting his supervisor know. He is late coming in and forgets to take his coat off before washing his hands. Absentmindedly, he removes his coat before working but doesn't think his coat could carry a virus on it. He starts working and begins handling ready to serve food and contaminating it.

Prevention: Wash hands after removing coats, hats, or scarves before beginning to work. Wash your hands frequently; when returning from a break, returning from the bathroom, between tasks. Keep personal belongings out of the kitchen.

Equipment to Food

Scenario: Cutting boards or prepping equipment not cleaned and sanitized between different foods or not washed every four hours with extended use with the same product.

Prevention: Wash, rinse and sanitize cutting boards, tongs, knives, spatulas, etc. between uses. Wash, rinse, and sanitize cutting boards used for PHF's every 4 hours. Wash, rinse and sanitize equipment in place such as slicers and stainless steel working surfaces. Use color-coded cutting boards for prepping.

Food to Food

Scenario: Raw meat is stored above ready to serve foods in reach-ins or walk-ins. Whole raw, unpasteurized eggs stored over lettuce, whole uncooked carrots, etc.

Prevention: Store raw proteins on shelves in the order of cooking temperatures; whole beef on top, raw ground meats on the middle shelf and poultry on the bottom to prevent cross-contamination. Use separate containers to separate different raw animal proteins from each other during storage. Designate an upper shelf for cooling which allows you safe and quick cooling of uncovered foods.

As you can see, the potential of a foodborne illness can be attributed to many different aspects in the kitchen. Cross-contamination is a potential threat to all commercial kitchen operations and it is important to take steps to prevent it: maintain good personal hygiene, correctly clean and sanitize equipment and food surfaces, and store and prepare raw proteins separately. These steps can assist you in keeping your food safe and customers in your seats.

Food Code References: 2.301.14,15, 3.301.11, 3.302.11, 3-307.11, 4-401.11, 4-904.11